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SUBJECT: Living History Program

START OF INTERVIEW

RUSSELL MAGNAGHI (RM): What would you like to know about the Living History Program?

INTERVIEWER (I): Okay, basically how Northern got involved with it?

RM: Okay, back in the summer of 1986 Tom Friggins from the Michigan Iron Industry Museum, which at that time was still in the process of being constructed, got in contact with Ruth the department head who got in contact with me and asked if the department would want to, was interested in participating in the Bureau of History's Living History Program. We'd met with him, I remember it was sometime in August, we'd met with Tom Friggins. And in the past the program had been in the hands of Michigan Tech. They had asked us to, over the years we had gotten applications to become involved in it, and I always felt, Ruth would send them to me and I would throw them in the trash because I felt that Tech was in close proximity. They were involved and they had been involved since the program started in 1976. And so I felt that we would have been intruding, and we weren't in to that, we didn't have students, we, nobody was trained. And so I just stayed out of it. Well, in '86, I guess, Tech got into a liability problem and the university did not want to be involved with the program because of liability. So they pulled out. And the Bureau of History was left on its own. And I think that year they actually operated on their own. They didn't, they still had some left over people from the year before, but they didn't have any, they didn't have any fusion of new students, because they weren't connected with Tech any longer. And so they asked us if we would do this and we talked, we went up and talked to Tom Friggins, and we got involved in the, we said yes. We could get into the program. At that time, the program, there was still the liability problem. And there was a certain concern by Lyle Shaw, the financial vice president here, he had similar concerns of Northern getting involved as Tech did. And word had gone back and forth and there was correspondence. So all the financial vice presidents knew of this liability. So they didn't want to get involved. So what we did was, we, I think it was Northern, well we worked out a deal where the history department taught the course. And the Department of Natural Resources kind of over saw the students, I think that's the way it worked out. So the bureau of history did not have a contract with Northern, just kind of a real jerry-built situation. But in the fall, Phi Alpha Theta was a major force of promoting the program and Jim Le Tarte put together a program, it was called the Living History Program. They came up with a very nice poster and it was November 6th, is that right, November 6th, yes, November 6th, 1986. We had, Tom Friggins came down and we had this program where he explained the Living History Program. Oh, I don't know, we must have had about, oh, I don't know, probably fifteen to about two dozen, well, no. I don't know, fifteen, twenty students that came. And Tom gave all the details, and he had slides, and he had all the details and we met over, I think in the Brule Room. And, well I guess, yeah. It was, which one was it, no, we met in the Marquette room, that was it. 7:00 pm, November 6, 1986. And there were a number of people that showed up who were

into reenacting. And they were interested and a whole crowd of people that came. And then subsequently, that was in November, then in January we sent out applications and we had, I think, no, no, wait a minute. It wasn't in January, but in, I guess soon after this we started heavily advertising. We had some articles in the paper. And then in January I guess applications were due. But students had a time to think about it over Christmas. But then they came back and they, we had about, oh, sort of escapes me. But we must have had close to a dozen people that applied. And we were only, well, we were looking for three people. Usually there's four, but they still had a leftover from the Michigan Tech era and he was going to finish out the last year. And so we needed three people. And we got the three people, Tom, no it wasn't Tom Friggins, it was Lynn Trenton was the director. And she came down to Northern and ran the interviews, just across the hall in the geography department, there's an office across from mine. And she was here for, I think, two days in February, early February. And did the interviews and eventually came up with Florence Bruhm, Mrs. Bruhm as she likes to be known. And Matt Baldus and there was a third fellow who I never met from recreation and on the eve of the start of the class he called and he had personal problems and he dropped out. So what happened was we only had two people from Northern and this fellow Peter whose last name slips my mind because I never really met Peter. So I didn't in anyway really interact with him. But we had these three, we had these two people from Northern. The course, we had this course called Historic Site Interpretation and the course was offered during the inter-session through May. Part of the problem was that it came in late and it had to be offered very quickly because I was going on vacation in early June. So all of this had to, I think June 7th or so, so all of this had to be taken care of prior to June 7th. And we ran the program as a team taught program. Dr. Kinnear, Jean Kinnear from recreation did the theory behind park interpretation and she did several classes. We met, we had a very nice set up. We met over in one of the rooms in the HPER building. And we had, oh, getting back to the classes. Since the course was offered as an inter-session course we had the two people who were in the course and then there was a Kelly Roberts who was a reenactor and she didn't, she wasn't selected.

BREAK IN INTERVIEW

RM: Okay, little break there but we'll continue. What we found was that reenactors were kind of set in their ways and really were constantly fighting. Even in the interview they were kind of constantly fighting the living history concept. Living history is not reenacting a battle but living that era and at least for Fort Wilkins it was 1870. And as a result the two people that signed up that were reenactors that signed up were out. But anyway, this student did take the course. And then there were one, two, three, there were about four other guys that took the course. So there was a class of about four, five, six, probably about seven people. The class really didn't work, I wasn't very happy with the class. The two people, Flo and Matt and Kelly were all good students. The other people were just kind of there because it was some extra credits that they could take and it was advantageous. So they didn't really have their hearts in the program. I didn't feel, I didn't think that they had their hearts in the program. But anyway, the program started in early May and ran through the month of May.

I: This Peter that you mentioned, is he the kid from Tech?

RM: Right.

I: Okay. Alright, so Northern isn't involved at all as far as choosing the students. It's the Department of Natural History?

RM: The Bureau of History, yeah.

I: The Bureau of History.

RM: Linnie Trenton selected the students, I didn't sit in on the interviews on this one. And it was pretty much we were contracted to, we were basically contracted to provide the course. That was sort of it.

I: So is Northern under contract now with,

INTERRUPTION

END OF INTERVIEW